

1. Definitions

Healthwatch refers to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

Employee refers to all Healthwatch employees.

Volunteers refers to all Healthwatch volunteers, including Directors.

CEO refers to the Healthwatch Chief Executive Officer.

Chair refers to the Chair of the Board of Directors for Healthwatch

Spaces refers both physical spaces such as offices, meeting rooms, event venues, as well as digital spaces such as online meetings and social media channels.

2. Scope

This policy covers employees, volunteer, contractors and members of the public.

3. Summary

We are committed to providing services and spaces which are welcoming, informative, safe and inclusive to our guests, our employees and our volunteers. We want everyone to feel comfortable accessing and participating in our spaces.

We expect everyone accessing our services and spaces to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Failure to abide by this Code of Conduct may result in services being restricted or withdrawn and admission to future events being refused.

4. Our Values

4.1. Our published values demonstrate that we aim to be inclusive, collaborative, independent, open and compassionate. We ask all users of Healthwatch spaces and services to follow our values. In addition:

- We aim to provide friendly and accessible services which make everyone feel welcomed and supported.
- We challenge oppression and prejudice and promote equity, inclusion and diversity

5. Conduct when engaging with Healthwatch

5.1. The following list is not exhaustive and should be seen as the minimum standards we expect, and that anyone using our spaces and services should follow. We encourage people to take responsibility for communicating their own needs, including their access needs and any reasonable requests to make a space more equitable and

inclusive. Healthwatch usually invites this information ahead of events, but needs and requests can be raised at any time by speaking to or emailing a Healthwatch employee. We expect everyone will:

- Not use language which is potentially discriminatory or offensive to others.
- Conduct themselves in a way that does not cause harm or distress to others.
- Treat others with dignity and respect and value other people's contributions and lived experiences.
- Use people's stated pronouns (sharing your own pronouns is optional).
- Not pursue individual agendas, particularly when these are at others' expense.
- Not distribute campaign emails, leaflets, petitions or other such materials, unless they have prior agreement from us.
- Allow people to disagree; challenge the issues not individuals and offer constructive criticism.
- Stick to one speaker at a time and not interrupt each other (we recognise that this may not be done intentionally).
- Not repeat what has already been said or make long statements or speeches (we recognise that this may not be done intentionally. If people feel they need more time to get their point across, they are invited to speak to an employee to discuss other ways of achieving this.)
- Encourage the participation of others.
- Respect confidentiality by not repeating what was said in meetings by others without their permission.
- Avoid overuse of acronyms or jargon and explain these in full when first using them.
- Use content warnings if sharing information that is likely to be upsetting.
- Put mobile phones and other electronic devices on silent in physical and online spaces (but participation via social media is encouraged).
- Endeavour to be in a private space and/or use headphones during online meetings to ensure privacy/confidentiality and reduce background noise.

5.2. The following are examples of behaviours that would represent a breach of this Code of Conduct:

- Aggression and/or threat of violence - all acts of physical intimidation, aggression or force, including threats.
- Sexual misconduct – any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. Can include, but is not limited to, sexual comments or jokes, sexual gestures, unwelcome

sexual advances, any non-consensual touching/groping, sharing of inappropriate images/sexual content.

- Discriminatory and/or exclusionary language and/or behaviour – any unjust or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group of individuals based on a protected characteristic or perceived characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Includes ageism, ableism, sexism, transphobia, racism, religious prejudice (e.g. Islamophobia, anti-Semitism), homophobia and discrimination based on marital status.
- Distribution of misinformation and/or information which is brought together with an intention to undermine and/or stir up hatred or disagreement.
- Bullying and/or abuse – any behaviour (physical, verbal or cyber) that intends to cause physical or psychological harm.
- Coercion – any behaviour that forces someone to do something they are not willing to do through threat, intimidation or manipulating a social power imbalance.
- Any other form of threats, threatening language or perceived threats, which are intended to make others feel uncomfortable, vulnerable or to make them act in a certain way.

5.3. We recognise that people have different identities, lived experiences and deeply held personal beliefs that may be contested by others. We require those accessing our spaces not to use Healthwatch as a platform for expressing their personal beliefs where they undermine the above code of conduct and behaviours

5.4. Where members feel it is appropriate to express personal beliefs, they should do so with respect and compassion for those that may disagree with them and not express personal beliefs in a way that could undermine, harass, exclude or intimidate others.

General Meetings

5.5. When attending our general meetings, guests will:

5.6. Abide by this code of conduct and any guidelines or ground rules set out at the start of the meeting

- Respect the authority of the Chair in their role as meeting leader.
- Engage in discussion and voting according to procedures, maintaining a respectful attitude towards the views of others.
- Follow any other policies such as the 'Public Board Meeting Policy'.
- Accept a majority vote as decisive and final.

6. Reporting incidents

- 6.1. Incidents that appear to breach this Code of Conduct should be reported to a Healthwatch employee either verbally or in writing.
- 6.2. The Healthwatch team, led by the CEO or Chair, will decide on appropriate action.

7. **Equity, diversity and inclusion**

- 7.1. We are committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in the way we provide services, and we expect everyone who participates in our spaces to share our approach.
- 7.2. Many organisations are set up to serve the needs of specific groups of people or communities of identity and interest. However, people must not unlawfully discriminate against anyone on the grounds of any protected characteristic: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

8. **Protecting the organisation's reputation**

- 8.1. Healthwatch has a duty to protect its good name.
- 8.2. Anyone using our services or spaces are asked to take an active interest in the public image of Healthwatch and uphold the reputation of the organisation and those who work and volunteer in it.
- 8.3. If someone or another organisation, is dissatisfied with our service, they should use the Healthwatch complaints procedure to resolve this.
- 8.4. Any failure to follow this Code of Conduct will be investigated by the CEO or Chair and subject to the seriousness of the breach, may result in:
 - disciplinary action being taken (for employees only)
 - being removed as a volunteer (volunteers only)
 - members of the public losing access to our services or spaces

In all cases, a breach may result in individuals being unable to participate in future Healthwatch events/activities.

- 8.5. Employee, members of the public, and others using our spaces must not speak to the press on behalf of Healthwatch, without permission from the CEO or Chair.

9. **Conflict of interest**

- 9.1. Individuals attending our events may have multiple roles within the community and sometimes a conflict of interest may arise with an event that Healthwatch facilitates.

9.2. If anyone has a conflict of interest in relation to a matter being discussed, we expect that they declare it so that it can be recorded and act in the best interests of the activity in question.

Additional Policies & Documents

9.3. The Healthwatch policies and documents referred to in this policy are available on request by contacting the Healthwatch Team on 01273 234 040 or email to policies@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk.

Date Policy Reviewed	3 December 2025
At the 15 January 2024 meeting of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Board of Directors, the Board approved the recommendation to delegate authorisation of operational policies to the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch.	
Date Approved by the CEO	4 December 2025
Next Review Date	December 2027